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‘The north wind doth blow And we shall have snow’

THE KIND OF picture portrayed in our cover photograph will not be familiar to our readers in Africa and India but to the people in England, North America or much of Europe it will be a typical winter snow scene. If you recognise the scene it will remind you of cold winds, icy roads and increasing fuel bills. It also makes us realise our age. Our children or grandchildren look forward to wrapping up and going out and throwing snowballs or building a snowman—while we begin to count the days until spring.



Although we may have differing attitudes to the winter's snow, for all of us it is a reminder of the regularity of the seasons: a reminder that spring does follow

winter and that summer comes in its turn. God has declared that just as we can trust the regularity of the seasons, equally we can trust God when He says He will fulfil His promises in creation.

The first article in this issue tells us about the beginning. It tells us about God's intentions when the earth was organised as the opening chapters of Genesis describe.

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'¹

The prophet Isaiah declared,

'He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited'²

One of the other Old Testament prophets spoke of God's purpose in the following words,

'For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea'³

A NEW BEGINNING

The third article explains how this purpose will be fulfilled—Christadelphians believe this will be in the very near future. It is the very regularity of the seasons that can give us confidence that what God has promised He will also perform.

'Thus saith the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant...'⁴

The covenant with David was the promise that God made to him that one in his line would rule over God's kingdom for ever. It was the promise about which the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary before the birth of Jesus.⁵ Sadly, because of disobedience, things went wrong for mankind.⁶ If we want a part in the fulfilment of God's purpose: if we want a place in the kingdom of God, then the gulf created in the beginning by man's sin needs to be bridged. It was to do just this and to bring about the salvation of mankind that Jesus came. The second article explains how we can become related to that salvation.

'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'⁷

Editor

¹Genesis 1. 1 ²Isaiah 45. 18 ³Habakkuk 2. 14 ⁴Jeremiah 33. 20, 21 ⁵Luke 1. 31-33

⁶Romans 5. 12- ⁷John 3. 16

The beginning

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

THE WORLD WE live in seems to be in a desperate state, but what does the Bible state as God's plan for this planet?

'For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: "I am the Lord, and there is no other."'¹

And,

'For the earth *will be* filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'²

God created the world, He is in control, His purpose is working out to a foreordained plan. God will save the world from ultimate disaster, and He will fill it with His glory.

That God's plan is not yet complete is very evident. Let us try to examine why the world is in the state it is today; and why man is so beset with problems. The Bible states that mankind has made the world what it is today! The situation is serious: crime, pollution, population, war, famine, social unrest, religious ferment and more, trouble the people of this planet. Yet man can also create great beauty; can display compassion; invent wonderful things to bring great profit to many—surely he is a paradoxical creature. Why is this?

Men and women seem incapable of treading a consistent pathway to success, to peace, to prosperity. God's prophet Jeremiah commented on this dilemma centuries ago:

'O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.'³

THE EXPLANATION OF MAN'S DILEMMA

There is an explanation for man's imperfection. It is an explanation which is often found to be unpalatable to modern sophisticated man. It is in the book of

¹Isaiah 45. 18 (NKJ) ²Habakkuk 2. 14 (NKJ) ³Jeremiah 10. 23 (NKJ)

Genesis; the book which describes the beginning of all things on earth, and given to man by God Himself.

'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.'⁴

Then God gave man and woman, Adam and Eve, a simple pass or fail test:

'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat the fruit of it you shall surely die."⁵

Adam failed this test, he disobeyed God. Eve ate first and Adam was a willing follower. As a result man and woman were fallen creatures, sin (the falling short of God's standards) had entered the world. Shame, sorrow, toil and death all followed from Adam's disobedience—it's all described in Genesis, but the apostle Paul summed it up, when he wrote a letter to Christian believers in Rome in the first century:

'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'⁶

THE SOLUTION

The rest of the Bible in essence, is the record of how God has planned to bring man back to Himself; and central to this plan is Jesus Christ. For though man has brought death and evil upon himself—God will bestow life on those who strive to return to God. The apostle Paul again:

'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'⁷

Mankind is currently in a mess to put it mildly; he is a sin-stricken creature, living in a world blighted by a miscellany of evils, largely brought upon himself. Without God, he seems to be heading inevitably towards disaster. We've seen that the Bible describes Jesus Christ as man's personal saviour, and likewise Jesus is also the saviour of the world. So the answer to all man's problems lies in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

When Jesus was on this earth 2,000 years ago, he accepted that there would be tragedies in a world where sinners lived. Jesus demonstrated his power over all kinds of problems: he stilled tempests, he fed the hungry, he raised the dead and he cured all kinds of diseases. It is evident that the Bible teaches us to look to Jesus, the Son of God, as the remedy for all the world's ills.

JESUS TO RETURN TO THE EARTH!

Obviously, to cure the world's present problems; to stop mankind destroying the world, we need Jesus Christ to return to the earth with a superabundance of his

⁴Genesis 2. 7 (NKJ) ⁵Genesis 2. 16, 17 (NKJ) ⁶Romans 5. 12 ⁷Romans 6. 23

healing power, which he displayed 2,000 years ago. And this is just what the Bible teaches! Evil will be removed when sin and death are banished from the earth, when Jesus Christ returns. This message is the burden of most of the Bible. This is the message of the prophets of God. This was the message of Jesus himself, and his disciples. This message is the Gospel—the ‘Good News’ concerning the Kingdom of God.

Evils will not continue for ever: God has promised to remove them completely when He fills the earth with His glory. The final picture which God gives us of the earth removes all our questions and dissolves all our fears.

‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’⁸

WHEN WILL GOD SAVE THE WORLD?

We believe that this will happen very soon. The whole creation is groaning for deliverance from the evils on the face of the earth. There are many verses throughout the Bible which promise the return of Jesus to the earth, stating that he will come back personally, bodily, gloriously, and with angelic power and authority from God. Without the return of Jesus, there would be no resurrection from the dead, no blessing of immortality for the faithful, no Kingdom of God on earth, and no saving the world from ultimate disaster. God’s purpose would be lost. The whole Bible message would be meaningless.

Without doubt the Bible promises Jesus’ return in clear and unequivocal terms. For example at the time when Jesus rose to heaven the angels told the disciples:

‘This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven.’⁹

Peter, speaking to Jews to whom he was preaching Christianity, said, ‘... and that he (God) may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.’¹⁰

We believe we are living in what the Bible calls ‘*the last days*’, the times that Jesus, the prophets and the disciples said would precede Jesus’ return to the earth.

The Bible tells us a lot about these ‘last days’: the world will be approaching an impasse; Israel will be back in her ancient land after a long exile; famine and disease will be rife; society will be breaking down. Here is an example of the kind of verses we can find in the Bible and which describe these times:

⁸Revelation 21. 4 (NKJ) ⁹Acts 1. 11 (NKJ) ¹⁰Acts 3. 20, 21 (NKJ)

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy,

'But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.'¹¹

During a time like this, the Bible states that Jesus is to return to the earth to restore God's Kingdom. Of course such divine intervention is not accepted by most men and women. They reject it and they mock it!

The apostle Peter anticipated such reactions:

'You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."¹²

No matter what man thinks, Jesus will return, his 'coming' is assured. He will come to set up God's Kingdom upon the ruins of the kingdoms of men. Let the ancient prophet Daniel illustrate this for us:

'... the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.'¹³

Also,

'His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'¹⁴

WHAT WILL GOD'S KINGDOM BE LIKE?

The laws of this kingdom on earth will be unique. They will not consist of legislation made by man for man, but divine laws whose purpose will be to lead nations to live in a right relationship with God. It was this relationship which Adam and Eve rejected in the garden of Eden, thereby bringing misery upon themselves, and sorrows for all their descendants.

In the kingdom of the new age, the government of Jesus Christ will be all powerful and incorruptible. The nations will be taught the ways of God. All the world will obey the Laws of God and be at peace. All the evils of the present will eventually disappear. The Bible prophecies literally teem with descriptions of these glorious times to come. If we confine ourselves to Isaiah, copious references will be found, for example:

'Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice ...'

¹¹II Timothy 3. 1-5 (NIV) ¹²II Peter 3. 3, 4 (NIV) ¹³Daniel 2, 44 (NKJ) ¹⁴Daniel 7. 27 (NKJ)

'Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.'¹⁵

Look up Isaiah, chapter 2, verses 11 and 65, for yourself and read the words. Listen to God's beautiful imagery describing the wonders of that Kingdom to come. They will give you a flavour of the Bible's message of hope for the world. Man may be destroying the earth, but God will intervene in the person of Jesus Christ.

HOPE FOR YOU PERSONALLY

The Bible offers a clear and consistent explanation of how man got himself into his predicament; into a world of evil and disaster. The Bible also gives a hope of escape, for the world, and for individuals who became related to God through Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you will be persuaded to look at the Bible message for yourself, even though only a handful of extracts have been quoted from Genesis to Revelation to try and illustrate this message.

Jesus' very last message to man was, "*Surely I am coming quickly.*" *Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*"¹⁶

Jesus' own prayer is a fitting conclusion. May it become truly your prayer too:

*'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . .
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.'*¹⁷

Michael Kipps
West Sussex

¹⁵Isaiah 32. 1, 16-18 (NKJ) ¹⁶Revelation 22, 20 (NKJ) ¹⁷Matthew 6, 9-13

Baptism—

A new beginning for the individual

IN THIS ISSUE of LIGHT we are considering new beginnings so why should baptism feature among the articles? How does it constitute a new beginning? And why is baptism so important to even warrant discussion? Most orthodox churches have long since discarded adult baptisms.

The subject of baptism is most interesting and highly significant for it is the start of a new and very different creature. The man or woman of the world becomes a son or daughter of God. This is a very special new beginning as we shall see.

The only reliable source of information on this and any other subject referring to God and His purpose is the Bible, and there are many allusions to baptisms throughout the Old Testament as well as in the better known Gospel records and Acts. We will concentrate on the more familiar New Testament for it is here we are given the true meaning and purpose of baptism.

We have broken the subject up into eight questions, so that by the end of the article we hope we will understand the truth of this matter and see why it figures so prominently in the Christian's life.

QUESTION 1: WHO INSTIGATED BAPTISM AND WHY?

The words *baptism*, *baptize* and *baptizing* are only found in the New Testament.

'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ...

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins ... He said unto them ... Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance'.¹

Although the Jews before the time of Christ used various symbolic washings—and Jesus refers to these—it was John the Baptist who was to prepare the way for Jesus by baptizing those who would repent or turn away from their present lives and bring forth 'fruit' or actions, as that means, worthy of repentance. In this way they acknowledged their sins and received forgiveness from God.

¹Matthew 3. 1-8

QUESTION 2: WHAT DID CHRIST HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE MATTER?

This is obviously an extremely important, in fact vital, question if we profess to be Christians. We will take this in four stages.

1. Was Jesus baptized?
2. What did he think of John the Baptist?
3. Did Jesus baptize?
4. What did Jesus tell his disciples to do?

'Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him . . . Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water . . . and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'²

It is quite clear from this that Jesus was baptized. Baptism had a dual purpose for him; Jesus needed to be baptized to fulfil all righteousness (which means to carry out all God's requirements) and also, following this act he received the Holy Spirit and was proclaimed as the Son of God. We also have confirmation from Jesus himself that he was baptized. In a conversation with two of his disciples he said,

'Ye know not what ye ask . . . ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of: and with the baptism that I am baptized withal, shall ye be baptized.'³

What did Jesus think of John?

'He (Jesus) began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? . . . A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet . . . For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist . . . all the people that heard him . . . justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves being not baptized of him'.⁴

A higher regard or commendation of John is difficult to imagine and Jesus also uses John as an example of God's authority in the matter of baptism when debating with the Pharisees:

'Jesus answered and said . . . The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves saying, if we shall say, from heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?'⁵

Here we have affirmation of John's work and that it was ordained of God.

Did Jesus baptize? It appears not from the following passage:

'When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made

²Matthew 3. 13-17 ³Mark 10. 38,39 ⁴Luke 7. 24-30 ⁵Matthew 21. 24, 25

and baptized more disciples than John. (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.) He left Judea and departed again into Galilee'.⁶

So it was not Jesus but his disciples that were baptising.

Would Jesus have approved of them doing this? What did he tell his disciples to do? We need to look at the last command Jesus gave to his disciples for this answer:

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee . . . And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you'.⁷

Jesus not only approved of John and his work but he commanded his disciples to baptise all those that would believe in the message of salvation that he came to bring.

QUESTION 3: WHAT OTHER EXAMPLES DO WE HAVE OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

There are many examples found in the Acts of the Apostles as shown in the chart below. Different apostles were involved in a variety of circumstances, from individuals to groups of men and women and even whole families. The apostle Paul in his letters to the early churches mentions a number of individual baptisms. It is clear that there were hundreds throughout Galatia, Corinth and Rome. These were not isolated incidents.

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Disciple</i>	<i>Person/People Baptized</i>
Acts 2. 37-41	Peter	3000 people
" 8. 5-13	Philip	A number of men and women
" 8. 5-13	Philip	Simon
" 8. 26-39	Philip	Ethiopian Eunuch
" 9. 17, 18	Ananias	Saul/Paul the Apostle—Acts 22. 16
" 10.	Peter	Cornelius, his relations and friends
" 16. 14-24	Paul	Lydia and her household
" 16. 25-34	Paul	Philippian Jailor and his family
" 18. 7-11	Paul	Crispus, his family and many Corinthians
" 19. 1-5	Paul	Disciples in Ephesus

All recorded conversions are always accompanied by a baptism into the name of Jesus. It was a command from Jesus that was faithfully practised by his disciples and accepted by all those who wished to follow Jesus.

⁶John 4. 1-3 ⁷Matthew 28. 16-20

QUESTION 4: WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO FIRST?

From reading all of the accounts in Scripture shown above we find a four-stage pattern emerges. People were helped to understand the Scriptures and Christ's purpose. So they first developed **knowledge** and understanding. When they **believed** this was true, they **repented** of their previous way of life or their sins and then they were **baptized**. So the four stages are—knowledge, belief, repentance and then baptism. You can't have one without the other. If knowledge is missing how do you know what to believe? If you don't believe what is the point or purpose of baptism? If you don't repent you obviously don't understand what Christ did and your relationship to God, and what if you're not baptized? That point is answered in our last question.

QUESTION 5: WHAT DOES THE ACT OF BAPTISM INVOLVE?

To understand this fully we need to appreciate the meaning of the original Greek words in Scripture. The original word is '*baptizo*' and means 'putting into' and was a word used in the dyeing trade when cloth was dyed. It had to be a total immersion, a complete dipping under for the dye to cover the cloth fully. Is this total immersion something that the disciples practised when they baptized their believers? You will have noticed that the terms going down into the water and rising up out of the water and the river Jordan are mentioned time and time again. Look at the following: '*And John also was baptizing at Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized*'.⁸ There was obviously a need for much water which of course we can understand if an individual had to be totally immersed in the water. This act of going down into the water and rising up has a special significance, as we shall see.

QUESTION 6: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ACT?

It has two very necessary and important functions. Baptism represents a washing away of past sins, the believer is able to make a new start, a new beginning to his life. The apostle Paul describes it as a resurrection to a new life. The idea of washing away sins and obtaining forgiveness has been thoroughly covered by many of the previous verses. The additional meaning is that of the death and resurrection of Christ. In this connection the whole of Romans chapter 6 is worth studying. We will just quote the following:

'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection'.⁹

Paul also writes, '*buried with him in baptism wherein also ye are risen with him*

⁸John 3. 23 ⁹Romans 6. 3-5

through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him (Jesus) from the dead'.¹⁰ Perhaps now we can understand why total immersion is so important.

QUESTION 7: IS CHRISTENING THEREFORE AN ACCEPTABLE FORM OF BAPTISM?

Coming after the Bible teaching we have just considered, this question hardly needs answering. However, it must be pointed out that all the elements of Christian baptism are absent when a few drops of water are sprinkled on the forehead of a baby. Belief and repentance are clearly not possible in one so young. Sprinkling is not immersion and so the symbolic burial with Christ does not occur and the rising to the new life cannot take place either. In view of today's easy-going attitude, it is very important that we understand God's Word and its true message.

QUESTION 8: IS BAPTISM REALLY NECESSARY AND WHAT DOES IT ACHIEVE?

'Jesus answered, verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'¹¹

And again:

'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved;

But he that believeth not, shall be damned.'¹²

Only if we believe and are baptized will we be saved. If we do not believe then obviously we would not wish to be baptized and are therefore condemned. The apostle Paul says, '*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ . . . and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*'.¹³ So then, when we are baptized we put on Christ and we become heirs or inheritors of the promises of salvation made to the forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This means eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Finally, Paul wrote a list of the basic essentials in his letter to Christians at Ephesus:

'There is one body, and one Spirit even as ye are called in one hope of your calling,

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all . . .'¹⁴

We would ask you to note that there is only one of everything, not many Gods or spirits or many faiths or churches but only one. Baptism is also listed here as an essential ingredient and there is only one type of baptism not various options for us to choose from. The message from the Scriptures to us is that baptism is a very special *new beginning* and necessary for our salvation. As Christians it is important to make sure that we understand what is required of us and apply it in our lives.

M. Boler

Luddesdown

¹⁰Colossians 2. 12 ¹¹John 3. 5 ¹²Mark 16. 16 ¹³Galatians 3. 27-29 ¹⁴Ephesians 4. 4-6

Change— imminent

WE SEE THE changes in the weather, the seasons come and go and we enjoy the cyclic pattern of growth and decay. On the other hand the changes are sometimes dramatic, sudden, catastrophic.

All mariners keep a careful watch on the weather. Gale force winds arise quickly and their very lives depend upon their watchfulness.

Referring to this, Jesus told the Pharisees:

'O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?'

This is a lesson we must take to ourselves. We know God has a plan with the earth. We know it unfolds according to the prophecies which we see are practically all fulfilled; but even though we know the seasons are changing, if we do not watch carefully, events can take us unawares. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in this vein:

'But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.'

When the time is right, God will act suddenly and the changes will be dramatic, sudden, destructive and inescapable.

There is plenty of evidence in the Bible of the way God starts new pages in His plan. We have the principles of His selection process laid out in the beginning in Genesis. We have the examples of the dramatic events at the time of Noah and at the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. Our Lord himself identified both these events as examples of what we should expect. In Luke 17 he explained that the busy activity of the world of Noah, characterised especially by violence, as it is today, continued unabated to the very day in which Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and

¹Matthew 16. 3 ²1 Thessalonians 5. 1-3

destroyed them all. Similarly, the immoral behaviour of Sodom, which again can be seen in the world around us, carried on right up to the day Lot left and they were all destroyed by fire. Jesus said,

'Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed'.³

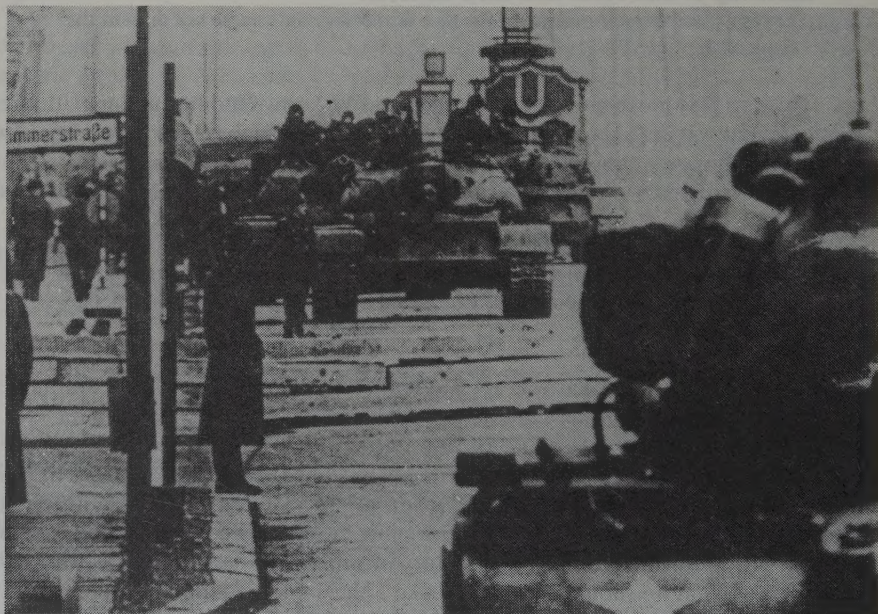
There is no excuse for us is there? The message is plain. Noah was saved through water. He was baptised into the ark which represented Christ, and it is only in Christ that we can escape the purification of the world by fire that is to happen when Christ returns.

WORLD IN TURMOIL

Events in the world are moving quickly. Who would have thought that East and West Germany would open their frontiers as they have just done? This turn around in the attitude of Communist governments could be construed as a failure of repression and the start of a new era of peace and friendship and freedom in the world. It is no such thing.

THE BERLIN WALL—CONFRONTATION

In 1961 Soviet and American tanks faced each other at Checkpoint Charlie



Keystone photograph

³Luke 17. 30



THE BERLIN WALL—CO-OPERATION?

*November 1989 West Berlin welcomes the procession
from East Berlin through Checkpoint Charlie*

We have witnessed over the last 45 years two great systems trying to establish Utopia in different ways. Communism, based on the ideal of the brotherhood of man, was forced upon nations for their own good because it was realised that human nature is naturally greedy and self-interested. What was not recognised was that a repressive regime resulted not in a philanthropic society but in one with no motivation. The result has been degeneration to a level where the Communist bloc cannot feed itself. Man is incapable of establishing the ideal of brotherhood. Repression leads further to the terrible abuses of power that we have seen in the Stalin era.

So now the Communists want Democracy.

Capitalism seems to have produced success. A comparison of East and West Germany seems to favour the West. But that is also a fallacy.

The Capitalistic approach maintains freedom of action and personal motivation but it has led to unbridled materialism. The western society is full of violence, exploitation, permissiveness, lawlessness and human greed. Greater possessions are not an indication of greater wisdom. **Both systems are failures.** Neither will, or can, approach the ideal state for man, described in the Bible as the Kingdom of heaven.

What we are witnessing in this turbulent world in which the nations are indeed roaring like the troubled sea, is a decline into chaos. A chaos in which order will soon be restored by the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE THIRD DISPENSATION

It was Peter who described in his second letter the three dispensations or new beginnings in God's purpose. He tells us that people will scoff and say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.'⁴

And yet people are willingly ignorant, ignoring the historical facts that God destroyed the first dispensation by water.

He tells us that the present dispensation will be destroyed by fire on the 'day of judgement', and finally that there will be a third dispensation—'*a new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness*'⁵

This plain explanation of what to expect cannot be denied. It is hard for us to imagine the world as God intended it to be. We are so embroiled in the everyday frantic action of this evil generation.

But Peter's exhortation to us is refreshing. He says, 'Do not think God will be slack concerning His promises. Account all previous delay as a blessing in that it has afforded us time'. As there is so little time left before the Spring of the Kingdom of God let us take his good advice in 1990.

*'Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless'*⁶

R. Griffiths
Hartley

⁴II Peter 3. 4 ⁵II Peter 3. 13 ⁶II Peter 3. 14